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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) program is to encourage schools to provide grants to exceptionally needy undergraduate students to help pay for postsecondary education. Giving priority to applicants with exceptional financial need, schools selecting FSEOG recipients must use the selection criteria discussed in this volume. Some recent changes to FSEOG regulations are highlighted. These focus on allocating funds to part-time or independent students. Chapter 1, "Participation, Fiscal Procedures, and Records," discusses the obligations of schools handling FSEOG funds. "Selecting Recipients," chapter 2, presents eligibility requirements and categories of students. Chapter 3, "Payments to Students," discusses requirements for disbursements. (SLD)

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Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants

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student financial assistance
u.s. department of education

Student Financial Aid Handbook

Volume 7 of 9

Application and Verification Guide

Student Loan Guide

Volume 1: Student Eligibility

Volume 2: Institutional Eligibility and Participation

Volume 3: Pell Grant Program

Volume 4: Campus-Based Common Provisions

Volume 5: Perkins Loans

Volume 6: Federal Work-Study

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Volume 8: Direct Loan and FFEL Programs

Volume 9: State Grant Programs

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Introduction

The purpose of the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) Program is to encourage schools to provide grants to exceptionally needy undergraduate students to help pay for postsecondary education. This provision is in Section 413C(c)(2) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. Giving priority to applicants with exceptional financial need, schools selecting FSEOG recipients must use the selection criteria discussed in chapter 2 of this volume.

RECENT CHANGES

Starting with the 2000-2001 award year, the allocation formula has changed. Under the new formula:

- the base is equal to the total of the base guarantee plus the pro rata share received for the 1999-2000 award year;
- the pro rata share is eliminated;
- and the fair share calculation is based on all the excess funds after the base guarantees are met.

CHAPTER 1

Participation, Fiscal Procedures, and Records

The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, (HEA) describes the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) Program allocation process in detail; those procedures are not repeated in the regulations. Funds are allocated directly to schools according to the statutory formulas in section 413D of the Act. Schools receive their disbursements in periodic installments either in advance or as reimbursements. The U.S. Department of Education **reallocates** funds to a school in a manner that best carries out the purposes of the FSEOG Program.

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

Program Participation Agreement Cite
34 CFR 676.8

A school that wants to participate in any Student Financial Assistance (SFA) Program must sign a Program Participation Agreement with the Secretary. (See *Volume 2 - Institutional Eligibility and Participation* for more general information about the Program Participation Agreement.)

The agreement provides that the school must use FSEOG funds it receives for a program solely for the purposes of the FSEOG Program and that the school must administer the FSEOG program in accordance with the HEA, and the General Provisions regulations.

CASH MANAGEMENT

A school must maintain funds received for its administration of the FSEOG Program in accordance with the cash management provisions of 34 CFR 668.163. The provisions are discussed in volume 2.

ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

Allocation of Funds Cite
34 CFR 673.4

As discussed in *Volume 4 - Campus-Based Programs Common Provisions*, if a school returns more than 10% of its allocation for a given award year, the Department will reduce the school's allocation for the

Waiver of 25% Requirement Cite
34 CFR 676.21(b)

second succeeding award year by the dollar amount returned. The Department may waive this provision for a specific school if it finds that enforcement would be contrary to the interest of the program. The Department considers enforcement to be contrary to the interest of the program only if the school returned more than 10% of its allocation due to circumstances that are beyond the school's control and that are not expected to recur. The information a school provided on its Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate (FISAP) for the 2000-2001 award year will determine the amount of reduction, if any, of the school's allocation for the 2002-2003 award year.

FEDERAL SHARE AND NONFEDERAL SHARE

Institutional Resources Cite
34 CFR 676.21(c)

The federal share of FSEOGs made by a school may not exceed 75% of the total FSEOGs. The school must contribute a nonfederal share (also called "institutional share") of 25%. However, the Department may waive the nonfederal share requirement and may authorize for an award year a federal share of 100% to a school that 1) is designated as an eligible institution under the Strengthening Institutions Program or the Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities Program and 2) requests the waiver (the increased Federal share) on the FISAP for that award year.

Including State Scholarship Example
Tina receives a grant of $675 from a state with a percentage of 96.26. Delgado Broadcasting School multiplies 96.26% by $675, resulting in $650, which is the portion of the grant that may be used to meet the nonfederal share requirement for a $2,600 FSEOG award ($1,950 is the federal share of the FSEOG award).

The nonfederal share of FSEOGs must be made from the school's own resources. These resources may include:

- institutional scholarships and grants;
- waivers of tuition or fees;
- state scholarships and grants; and
- funds from foundations or other charitable organizations.

The Department has determined that all state scholarships and grants, except for the Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (LEAP) (formerly the State Student Incentive Grant [SSIG] Program) and the Special Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (SLEAP) programs are eligible funds that may be used to meet the nonfederal share requirement of FSEOGs. LEAP and SLEAP grants, for this purpose, are defined as the federal LEAP and SLEAP allocation plus the minimum required state matching amount. The remaining state grants are not considered LEAP or SLEAP grants.

Dear Partner Letter CB-00-13, issued in September 2000, provided a chart indicating what percentage of each state's scholarships could be used to provide the nonfederal share of FSEOGs for the 2000-2001 award year. The Department computed the percentages in the chart on the basis of information furnished by the respective states regarding expected expenditures for state scholarships and grants for the 2000-2001 award year, and by using the 2000-2001 LEAP and SLEAP allocation data and required matching information. A similar chart for the 2001-

2002 award year will be issued in a Dear Partner Letter later in 2001. Each school can apply the appropriate state percentage to the state scholarships and grants its students receive to determine the total amount of state scholarships and grants that may be used to meet the FSEOG nonfederal share requirement.

As a variance from use of the percentages indicated in the chart, if a school has specific knowledge that a state scholarship or grant—irrespective of its name—is considered to be the required state matching portion of a LEAP or SLEAP grant, that scholarship or grant may not be used to meet the FSEOG nonfederal share. Also, if a school has documented knowledge that a state scholarship or grant is not comprised of LEAP or SLEAP monies (federal or state), 100% of the scholarship or grant may be used as the FSEOG nonfederal share.

The 2001-2002 nonfederal share requirement of 25% (unless the school qualifies for a waiver) may be met by one of three methods. In the following discussion of these methods, you should note that for a student to meet the definition of an FSEOG recipient, some portion of the grant awarded the student must have come from the FSEOG federal dollars. Also, by the time the FSEOGs are disbursed (regardless of what point in the award period the disbursements are made), the required match must have been accomplished; that is, the school's own resources must have been disbursed before or at the time the federal dollars are disbursed. However, it is important to note that outside resources[1] can be used to match FSEOGs even if the funds are received at a later date, provided that the school has written information about funds that the noninstitutional agency or organization is awarding to the student involved. The written information must be kept on file at the school.

The three methods a school may use to meet its nonfederal share follow:

1. Individual FSEOG recipient basis—the school provides its share to an individual FSEOG recipient together with the federal share; that is, each student's total FSEOG would consist of 25% nonfederal resources and 75% federal dollars for the 2001-2002 award year.

2. Aggregate basis—the school ensures that the sum of all funds awarded to FSEOG recipients in the 2001-2002 award year comprises 75% FSEOG federal funds and 25% nonfederal resources. For example, if a school awards a total of $60,000 to FSEOG recipients in 2001-2002, it has to ensure that $45,000 comes from FSEOG federal funds and $15,000 comes from nonfederal resources; if there are 100 FSEOG recipients, the entire $15,000 nonfederal resource requirement can be met by awarding a total of $15,000 in nonfederal resources to four FSEOG recipients. However, each FSEOG recipient must receive some FSEOG federal funds.

1. For example, state scholarships and foundations or other charitable organization funds.

3. Fund-specific basis—the school establishes an "FSEOG fund" into which it deposits FSEOG federal funds and the required 25% nonfederal share. Awards to FSEOG recipients then are made from the fund.

ADMINISTRATIVE COST ALLOWANCE (ACA)

Administrative Cost Allowance Cite
34 CFR 673.7

When a school calculates its administrative cost allowance for the 2001-2002 award year, the school must include in its calculation the full amount of its FSEOGs—both the 75% federal share and the required 25% nonfederal share. However, a school that chooses to provide more than a 25% institutional share to FSEOG recipients may not include an FSEOG institutional share in excess of 25% in its FISAP or in the calculation of its administrative cost allowance. If the Department has granted a school a waiver of its required nonfederal share, that school may calculate its administrative cost allowance only on the full federal portion. For additional information about the administrative cost allowance, refer to volume 4.

CARRY FORWARD/CARRY BACK

Carry Forward/Carry Back Cite
34 CFR 676.18

A school may spend up to 10% of its current year's FSEOG allocation (initial and supplemental) in the **following** award year (carry forward). If the school carried forward funds to be spent in the following award year, the school must report that amount on the FISAP. For example, if a school carried forward 10% of its Federal Work-Study (FWS) 2000-2001 allocation to be spent in 2001-2002, the school must report this amount on the October 2001 FISAP, in Part V of the Fiscal Operations Report for 2000-2001. Before a school may spend its current year's allocation, it must spend any funds carried forward from the previous year.

A school is also permitted to spend up to 10% of its current year's FSEOG allocation (initial and supplemental) for expenses incurred in the prior award year (carry back). The official allocation letter for a specific award period is the school's authority to exercise this option.

Also, a school is permitted to spend any portion of its current year's FSEOG allocation (initial and supplemental) to make awards to students for payment periods that begin on or after May 1 of the prior award year but end prior to the start of the current award year (carry back for summer). This carry back authority for summer FSEOG awards is in addition to the authority to carry back 10% of the current year's FSEOG allocation for use during the previous award year.

TRANSFER OF FUNDS

The HEA prohibits the transfer of FSEOG Program funds to any other program. Since the 1993-94 award year, schools have been prohibited from transferring FSEOG funds to the FWS Program. However, a school may transfer up to 25% of its FWS allocation and 25% of its Federal Perkins Federal Capital Contribution (FCC) allocation to the FSEOG Program.

A school that transfers funds to the FSEOG Program from FWS during an award year must transfer any unexpended funds **back** to the FWS Program at the end of the award year. The same requirement exists for Perkins Loan FCC funds transferred to the FSEOG Program.

FISCAL PROCEDURES AND RECORDS

Fiscal Procedures and Records Requirements Cites
34 CFR 676.19(b)

In addition to following the fiscal procedures and records requirements mentioned in volume 2 and volume 4, a school must meet the following requirements, which are included in the FSEOG regulations:

- A school must establish and maintain an internal control system of checks and balances that insures that no office can both authorize FSEOG payments and disburse FSEOG funds to students.
- A school must establish and maintain program and fiscal records that are reconciled at least monthly.
- Each year a school must submit a FISAP and other information the Department requires. The information must be accurate and must be provided on the form and at the time specified by the Department.

Selecting Recipients

CHAPTER 2

GENERAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Student Eligibility Cite
34 CFR 676.9

To receive a Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG), a student must meet the applicable eligibility requirements listed in *Volume 1 - Student Eligibility*. In addition, an eligible recipient must be an undergraduate student and must have financial need.

FSEOG Undergraduate Student Definition Cite
34 CFR 676.2(b)

An undergraduate student is defined under the FSEOG Program as a student who is enrolled in an undergraduate course of study at an institution of higher education and who:

- as not earned a bachelor's degree or first professional degree; and
- is in an undergraduate course of study that usually does not exceed four academic years or is enrolled in a four- to five-academic-year program designed to lead to a first degree.[1]

A student who has earned a bachelor's or first professional degree is **not** eligible to receive an FSEOG to pursue an **additional** undergraduate degree[2], based on the above definition of undergraduate student. A school must make FSEOG funds reasonably available (to the extent of available funds) to all eligible students.

PRIORITY ORDER FOR FSEOGs

In determining the priority order in which students will be awarded FSEOG funds in any given award year, a school must first choose those students with exceptional financial need—that is, those with the lowest Expected Family Contributions (EFCs) who will also receive Federal Pell Grants in that award year. We will refer to this group of students as the "first selection group."

1. A student enrolled in a program of any other length is considered an undergraduate student for only the first four academic years of that program.

2. Note that the definition of undergraduate student in the FSEOG regulations (676.2) differs from the definition in the Federal Perkins Loan and FWS program regulations (see 34 CFR 674.2 and 675.2). The definition of undergraduate student in the Federal Perkins Loan and FWS program regulations does permit a person with a bachelor's or first professional degree to receive aid from those programs to pursue an additional undergraduate degree.

First and Second Selection Groups Cite
34 CFR 676.10(a)

If the school has FSEOG funds remaining after awarding FSEOG funds to the entire first selection group, the school must next award FSEOG funds to those eligible students with the lowest EFCs who will not receive Federal Pell Grants in that award year. We will refer to this group of students as the "second selection group."

First Selection Group Criteria Example
For example, Steve and Bill are enrolled at Ruthless Business School in a program that begins in June 2000 and ends in August 2000, and both are among those students with the lowest EFCs who will also receive Pell Grants ***in that payment period****. Even though Steve is receiving a 1999-00 Pell Grant disbursement for that payment period and Bill is receiving a 2000-01Pell Grant disbursement for that payment period, both students have met the first-selection-group requirements for that payment period.*

CONSIDERING FEDERAL PELL GRANT ELIGIBILITY

A student who will also receive a Federal Pell Grant in that award year is a student who has demonstrated Pell Grant eligibility for the same award year based upon:

- a Student Aid Report (SAR) the student submits to the school;
- an Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR) the school receives from the Central Processing System (CPS); or
- a manual calculation.

The school must keep the appropriate Pell Grant eligibility information on file. If the school determines a student's Pell Grant eligibility by one of the above methods and awards an FSEOG based on that determination but the FSEOG recipient does not actually receive a Pell Grant during the award year, the school relied on the demonstrated eligibility in good faith and, thus, is not required to recover the FSEOG funds.

Certain flexibilities exist when determining whether a student is considered to be in the FSEOG first selection group during a crossover payment period, that is, a payment period that begins before July 1 on any award year and ends after July 1 of that same award year. If a student receives a Pell Grant during a crossover payment period and the student is among those students with the lowest EFCs, the student satisfies the FSEOG first selection group awarding requirements for that same crossover payment period regardless of which award year the Pell Grant funds are attributed.

Also, a student does not necessarily have to receive a Pell Grant in the same crossover payment period to be awarded FSEOG funds under the first selection group requirements for that payment period. A student can be awarded FSEOG funds under the first selection group requirements during a crossover payment period, from either award year's allocation, as long as the student will also receive a Pell Grant in the award year to which the crossover payment period is attributed for Pell Grant purposes.

Payment Period Definition Cite
34 CFR 668.4

"Payment period" is defined as a semester, trimester, or quarter; for a school not using those academic periods, it is the period between the beginning and the midpoint or between the midpoint and the end of an academic year.

First Selection Group/Payment Period Crossing July 1 Example
(Standard-Term School)

***In the summer session only*—include in the first selection group students who have the lowest EFCs and who will also receive Federal Pell Grants in that payment period regardless of the award year to which the Pell Grant disbursement is attributed.**

LESS-THAN-FULL-TIME AND INDEPENDENT STUDENTS

Less-Than-Full-Time and Independent Students Cite
34 CFR 676.10(b)

If a school's allocation of FSEOG funds is directly or indirectly based in part on the financial need demonstrated by its less-than-full-time or independent students, a school is required to offer a reasonable proportion of its FSEOG allocation to such students. A school cannot exclude less-than-half-time students from its definition of less-than-full-time students. Additional information is in *Volume 4 - Campus-Based Programs Common Provisions.*

MAKING FSEOGS AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

A school must develop written selection procedures to ensure that FSEOG recipients are selected on the basis of the lowest EFC and Pell Grant priority requirements over the entire award year in accordance with the selection provisions found in 34 CFR 676.10. For a school that enrolls students as often as monthly or weekly, FSEOG funds can be reserved for use throughout that award year (on the basis of institutional experiences from previous periods), and selection practices can be applied in a manner that would assure a reasonable consistency over the entire award year.

ESTABLISHING CATEGORIES OF STUDENTS

The school is allowed to establish categories of students to be considered for FSEOGs as a means of administering its packaging policies. Categories may be based on class standing, enrollment status, program, date of application, or a combination of factors. By establishing these categories, the school is attempting to ensure that the students in each category have an opportunity to be awarded FSEOG funds. The percentage or dollar amount of funds assigned to each category is also at the school's discretion; there is no requirement to make the percentage or dollar amount proportional to the need of

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students in a particular category or even to the number of students in the category.

Categorization may not be used to exclude certain students or groups of students from consideration. If the school knows that its funds are so limited as to effectively exclude year after year categories that come later in the sequence, the school may not be in compliance with the "reasonably available" provision. This principle would not apply to a category made up of students whose applications are received after a specific deadline; there is no requirement to reserve funds for late applicants although the school is not precluded from doing so.

A school would not be in compliance with the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA), as amended, and with the FSEOG regulations were it to award FSEOGs on a first-come, first-served basis or were it to arbitrarily to set expected EFC benchmarks (cutoffs) from below which it would select FSEOG recipients. Such a practice might exclude otherwise eligible students from the selection process. Furthermore, professional judgment is not an appropriate means of attempting to resolve the indicated circumstance; professional judgment is applicable only to making an adjustment or adjustments to an expected EFC or to a cost of attendance amount, not as a means to circumvent the FSEOG selection policy.

Payments to Students

CHAPTER 3

MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM AWARD AMOUNTS

Minimum and Maximum Awards Cite
34 CFR 676.20

A school may award a Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) in an amount the school determines a student needs to continue his or her studies for an academic year. A student's minimum allowable award for an academic year may be reduced proportionately if the student is enrolled for less than an academic year. An FSEOG may not be less than $100 and may not exceed $4,000 for a full academic year unless the student has reasonable costs of study abroad that exceed the cost of attendance at the home school. A school may increase the maximum amount of the FSEOG from $4,000 to as much as $4,400 for a student participating in a study-abroad program that is approved for credit by the home school.

GENERAL DISBURSEMENT REQUIREMENTS

A school must disburse FSEOG funds to a student or the student's school account in accordance with the cash management regulations in 34 CFR 668.164. The cash management requirements that apply specifically to the campus-based programs are discussed in Volume 4 - Campus-Based Programs Common Provisions. The provisions that apply to all Student Financial Assistance (SFA) programs are discussed in detail in Volume 2 - Institutional Eligibility and Participation.

If a student ceases attendance **after** receiving his or her FSEOG but before the end of the payment period, the school determines the amount of any return of Title IV funds as discussed in volume 2.

FREQUENCY OF DISBURSEMENTS

Frequency of Disbursements Cite
34 CFR 676.16(a)
34 CFR 676.16(e)

A school that is awarding an FSEOG for a full academic year must advance a portion of the grant during each payment period, **even if it does not use standard academic terms.**

In general, to determine the amount of each disbursement, a school will divide the total FSEOG award by the number of payment periods the student will attend. For a school that measures progress in credit hours and has academic terms, a payment period is defined as a term (a semester, trimester, quarter, or nonstandard term). The definition of payment period for a school that does not have academic terms or a school that measures progress in clock hours is discussed in detail in volume 2 and 34 CFR 668.4.

A school may advance funds **within** a payment period in whatever installments it determines will best meet the student's needs. However, if the total amount awarded a student under the FSEOG Program is less than $501 for an academic year, only one payment is necessary.

UNEVEN COSTS/UNEQUAL DISBURSEMENTS

Uneven Costs Cite
34 CFR 676.16(b)

If the student incurs uneven costs or receives uneven resources during the year and needs extra funds in a particular payment period, a school may make unequal FSEOG disbursements. The school may also make unequal disbursements under the Federal Perkins Loan Program. For a discussion of uneven costs and unequal disbursements, see *Volume 5 - Perkins Loans.*

LATE DISBURSEMENTS

Late Disbursement Cite
34 CFR 668.164(g)

Post-Withdrawl Disbursements Cite
34 CFR 668.22(a)(4)

A school may make a late FSEOG disbursement to an ineligible student if the student became ineligible solely because the student is no longer enrolled at the school for the award year. Before the student dropped out, the school must have received a Student Aid Report (SAR) or Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR) for the student with an official Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and must have awarded the student the FSEOG. The school may make that late disbursement only if the funds are used to pay for educational costs that the school determines the student incurred for the period in which the student was enrolled and eligible, and the school must make the late disbursement no later than 90 days after the date the student became ineligible because he or she was no longer enrolled. If a student has withdrawn, a school may be required to make a post-withdrawal disbursement of FSEOG. See volume 2.

FSEOG OVERAWARDS AND OVERPAYMENTS

To determine if a student has received an FSEOG overaward or overpayment, a school must follow the procedures in 34 CFR 673.5. A list of resources and a discussion of overawards and overpayments are included in volume 4.

COORDINATION WITH BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS GRANTS

To determine the amount of an FSEOG for a student who is also eligible for an educational grant from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), a school must coordinate the awards according to the provisions of 34 CFR 673.6, discussed in volume 4.

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